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WASHINGTON -- It took some shocking statistics -- 33 million around the world suffering from HIV and AIDS and 6,000 new infections every day -- for lawmakers to put aside policy disputes and come together behind a significant act of generosity.

The House voted 308-116 Wednesday to more than triple, to \$50 billion a year over the next five years, the money available for a program fighting AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in Africa and other stricken areas of the world.

House Democrats, who voted unanimously in favor of the bill, were effusive in their praise of President Bush, who promoted the global AIDS program that Congress originally enacted in 2003 and backed the House bill.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, funded at \$15 billion over the 2003-2008 period, is "universally recognized as one of the shining accomplishments of the Bush administration," said Rep. Jim McGovern, a Massachusetts Democrat.

About \$41 billion of the \$50 billion would be devoted to AIDS, significantly expanding a program credited with saving more than 1 million lives in Africa alone in the largest U.S. investment ever against a single disease.

Democrats voted unanimously in favor the bill. Voting with them were Republicans Judy Biggert of Clarendon Hills and Mark Kirk of Deerfield. Voting against the bill were Republicans Peter Roskam of Wheaton and Donald Manzullo of Crystal Lake.

Twenty million people around the world have perished from AIDS, said House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman, a California Democrat. "We have a moral imperative to act and to act decisively."

The White House said the program is supporting treatment for about 1.45 million people and is on track to meet its goals of backing treatment for 2 million, preventing 7 million new infections and providing care for 10 million, including orphans and vulnerable children.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, top Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee, said the

program is based on altruism but also has strengthened U.S. security.

If the AIDS pandemic isn't addressed, she said, it "will continue to spread its mix of death, poverty and despondency that is further destabilizing governments and societies and undermining the security of entire regions."

The compromise bill was one of the last endeavors of the former Foreign Affairs Committee chairman, Tom Lantos, a California Democrat who died of cancer in February. The measure is named after Lantos and his predecessor as chairman, the late Rep. Henry Hyde, an Illinois Republican. They worked together on the 2003 act.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee has approved a similar \$50 billion bill, and the legislation is seen as having a good chance of passing in an election year in which few major bills will reach the president's desk.

To advance the legislation, conservatives had to give up a provision in the 2003 act requiring that one-third of all HIV prevention funds be spent on abstinence programs. Instead the bill directs the administration to promote "balanced funding for prevention activities" in target countries.

Liberals, in turn, had to accept some restrictions on family planning groups participating in AIDS programs. Conservatives, concerned that money might be diverted to abortion promotion, pushed for a provision that allows the use of funds for HIV/AIDS testing and counseling services in those family planning programs supported by the U.S. government.

A measure in the 2003 act requiring groups receiving funds to have a policy explicitly opposing prostitution and sex trafficking, opposed by some health groups as impeding anti-AIDS efforts among sex workers, was also left intact.

The White House, which originally promoted doubling the program to \$30 billion, has expressed concern over the \$50 billion figure but has not opposed it.

"This is irrational generosity," said Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., arguing that the country

doesn't have enough money to help veterans and the elderly. "This is benevolence gone wild."

The bill authorizes \$10 billion a year, or \$50 billion through 2013. Of that, \$41 billion is for AIDS prevention and treatment, \$4 billion for tuberculosis and \$5 billion for malaria. The actual dollars still have to be approved in annual spending bills, but over the past five years Congress exceeded the \$15 billion goal, appropriating \$19 billion for global AIDS and related programs.

The legislation would expand the program, originally focused on 15 mainly sub-Saharan African countries, to include Caribbean nations as well as Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho in Africa. The goal of the next five years is to prevent 12 million new infections, provide anti-retroviral treatment for 3 million and train more than 140,000 health care workers. The bill would increase coordination with drinking water and nutrition programs and efforts to educate girls and women.

"This will be remembered as the single most significant achievement of President Bush's two terms in office," said Rep. Donald Payne, D-N.J., chairman of the Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Africa.